

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :
 :
 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
 COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
 -----:

INTERVIEW OF: LT [REDACTED]

Tuesday,
 October 13, 2015

USCG Seventh District Command Center
 Miami, Florida

BEFORE:

JON FURUKAWA, NTSB
 DENNIS BRYSON, ABS
 PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services
 PAUL WEBB, U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

CDR [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard JAG Corps

This transcript was produced from audio
 provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

LT [REDACTED], USCG

TAKEN ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
5	14	Billed	Billeted
41	24	(inaudible)	SAR-OU
42	1	(inaudible)	SAR-OU
42	2	SROU	SAR-OU
42	21	MISIL	MISLE
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If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED.

Initials

LT [REDACTED], USCG

Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[REDACTED] LT, USCG

Signature of Person providing the above information

NOVEMBER 4, 2015

Date

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2:17 p.m.

MR. FURUKAWA: It is Tuesday, the 13th of October, 2015. It is 1417 in the afternoon.

We are in Miami at the District's U.S. Coast Guard District 7 Command Center. We are here to interview Lt. [REDACTED]. That's [REDACTED]. And he was the command duty officer on October 1 --

LT. [REDACTED] I believe -- was it October 1st or October 2nd? Was it that Friday?

So the 2nd?

PARTICIPANT: It started on the 1st.

LT. [REDACTED] Sure. I was the 2nd.

MR. FURUKAWA: You were the 2nd?

LT. [REDACTED] Yes. October 2nd, 2015.

PARTICIPANT: So that was day watch?

LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

PARTICIPANT: So you were on with?

LT. [REDACTED] Petty Officer [REDACTED]

(phonetic).

PARTICIPANT: Okay. The second day?

LT. [REDACTED] On the 2nd.

MR. FURUKAWA: But not the first day he was on the watch?

LT. [REDACTED] Not on October 1st. No.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Do you know who was on
2 watch on the 1st?

3 LT. [REDACTED] October 1st was Chief Petty
4 Officer [REDACTED] (phonetic).

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. We'll interview him
6 anyway.

7 Okay. And Lt. [REDACTED] -- or can I call you
8 [REDACTED]

9 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Just call me Jon.

11 You know that you're being taped?

12 LT. [REDACTED] I do.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And we'll go around
14 and introduce ourselves and who we represent.

15 This is Jon Furukawa from the NTSB. And I'm
16 the Survival Factors Group Chairman.

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE
18 Services.

19 I'm a member of the Survival Factors Group.

20 MR. BRYSON: Dennis Bryson, ABS. Member of
21 the Survival Group.

22 MR. WEBB: Paul Webb, U.S. Coast Guard D17
23 Survival Group.

24 CDR. [REDACTED] Commander [REDACTED] CG JAG
25 representative of Lt. [REDACTED]

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

2 And anything different from what I said?

3 LT. [REDACTED] No.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Lieutenant [REDACTED]

5 [REDACTED] Command Duty Officer.

6 LT. [REDACTED] Correct. U.S. -- U.S. Coast
7 Guard. Correct.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. For the second day.

9 [REDACTED] how old are you now?

10 LT. [REDACTED] Twenty-nine.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Twenty-nine.

12 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: And how long have you been in
14 the Coast Guard?

15 LT. [REDACTED] Including my time at the Coast
16 Guard Academy as a cadet, I came on active duty June of
17 2005.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: 2005 is when you graduated?

19 LT. [REDACTED] 2005 is when I entered. 2009 is
20 when I graduated.

21 So active duty commissioned officer since
22 May 20 of 2009 to present day.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So that's six years?
24 Six years, right?

25 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: And can you tell me what you
2 did in your six years as a commissioned officer?

3 LT. [REDACTED] Sure. My first 18 months was as
4 a student naval aviator at Naval Air Station Whiting
5 Field assigned to Training Air Wing 5 flying fixed-wing
6 aircraft.

7 From there, I was medically grounded and
8 went to Maritime Safety Security Team New York in New
9 York City. Was there for two and a half years
10 conducting maritime law enforcement, counter-narcotics
11 and counter-terrorism operations.

12 And then from that assignment, I proceeded
13 here to the Coast Guard's District 7 Command Center,
14 billed as a command duty officer and originally began
15 my qualifications on the law enforcement side followed
16 by search and rescue qualification followed by
17 ultimately becoming command duty officer in my -- the
18 beginning of my second year here.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Second year? Okay.

20 LT. [REDACTED] Correct. It took -- it took
21 about a year to get qualified -- a little over a year -
22 -

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

24 LT. [REDACTED] -- as a command duty officer.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

1 And can you tell us about your watch on I
2 guess after this started?

3 LT. [REDACTED] Sure. The beginning of my watch
4 on October 2nd?

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes.

6 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

7 So I came on duty, received our pass-down as
8 normal at 0600 on Friday, October 2nd. In the pass-
9 down, it was made to my attention of the distress
10 situation that was developing from the day prior.

11 We began coordinating with our SMC in the
12 early morning hours after the watch relief, looking
13 into search planning for potentially getting assets
14 into that area given the fact that there was a severe
15 meteorological event, i.e, the hurricane -- Category 4
16 -- currently over the Bahamas in the vicinity of where
17 we would be searching. That basically transcribed
18 during the entire day with dispatching aircraft or
19 attempting to dispatch aircraft.

20 So we started off with contacting Air
21 Station Clearwater, Florida which has an HC-130 hotel
22 model aircraft.

23 We spoke to their air crew and their
24 operations officer and discussed the possibility of
25 launching them. They accepted the mission. They

1 launched that morning. And actually, I believe -- I
2 believe actually the -- the watch prior may have
3 actually launched them because they were on scene for
4 first light which was shortly after our relief process.
5 So I don't believe I actually gave the call to launch
6 them. But they were on scene at first light which is
7 around 0730 the next -- that morning.

8 We talked to the aircraft over the radio,
9 were made aware of the severe weather conditions they
10 were experiencing -- high winds, limited visibility. I
11 think at one point they tried -- they actually tried to
12 -- around 0800 -- and the reason I know it was 0800 is
13 because of the -- the morning brief was about to occur.

14 Around 0800, they were making attempts to
15 penetrate the storm to basically get to the position
16 where the vessel -- or where we believed the -- the
17 vessel to have been based on AIS data from the day
18 prior. So I -- I'd strike that. It wasn't
19 the (inaudible). It was AIS data from the day prior.

20 However, the -- basically at the center of
21 the storm -- the eye of the storm was in very close
22 proximity to where that position of -- you know --
23 potentially where the vessel could be -- was. So it
24 was inhibiting our efforts substantially and able to
25 get an asset over there.

1 So the C-130 made attempts to get into that
2 area. We ended up doing a drift from that AIS data
3 point to be able to give the C-130 a better potential
4 search area, if it were in fact able to conduct
5 searches in that weather.

6 We ended up giving them four corner points,
7 so basically, a box. I can't remember the dimensions.
8 And I do remember it was basically to the northeast of
9 where the eye of the storm was centered.

10 The C-130 was able to do I believe 80
11 percent of that box. But they were staying mostly to
12 the north and to the east portion of that box. They
13 were unable to get to the south -- southwestern
14 portions due to the significant weather that they were
15 experiencing which was in excess of 80 knots at some
16 points that they were reporting over the radio.

17 PARTICIPANT: Eighty knots of wind?

18 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

19 PARTICIPANT: They couldn't see down in the
20 water?

21 LT. [REDACTED] No.

22 They were reporting zero visibility and 80-
23 knot wind gusts and fluctuations in their air speed of
24 approximately 100 knots due to the -- the winds and
25 their relative motion.

1 PARTICIPANT: That's the forward movement of
2 the plane?

3 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. So they were -- they were
4 seeing fluctuations depending on the direction they
5 were flying.

6 PARTICIPANT: So they would get slower
7 speeds and then fast --

8 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

9 PARTICIPANT: And then as the band blows
10 through, it would speed up?

11 LT. [REDACTED] Correct. As -- as they were
12 changing directions, it was affecting their air speed
13 by increments of up -- upwards of 100 knots is what was
14 reported by the aircraft commander over the radio.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: So they're flying above the
16 weather, and as they're trying to penetrate --

17 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: -- that's when they start
19 feeling the 80 knots.

20 LT. [REDACTED] As they started to enter the
21 outer bands of the storm is when they started to
22 experience 80- knot winds.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And that's when they
24 go back up again, I guess.

25 LT. [REDACTED] I -- I don't know if they go up

1 again or not. I -- I couldn't tell you the -- the
2 current --

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Or if they didn't keep on
4 going down and try to go below the --

5 LT. [REDACTED] I couldn't say that's --

6 PARTICIPANT: Do you have knowledge of how
7 they approached the storm? Is that your --

8 LT. [REDACTED] Specifics, no.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So I guess we'll have
10 to ask that of your rep. Okay.

11 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I have my search and
12 rescue notes, and it might have been you who's passing
13 it on to us. This was from you guys. "Search and
14 Rescue Update, C-130 from Clearwater first couldn't get
15 through the storm and then decided to stay."

16 Does that ring a bell? I mean, that's what
17 they said. Eighty percent of the search area --

18 LT. [REDACTED] It does.

19 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- numerous (inaudible)
20 contacts. It's --

21 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

22 So originally, the -- the C-130 was not able
23 to penetrate due to these fluctuating winds.

24 At some point, they end -- ended up finding
25 better weather. And that's where they were doing the

1 searches in this box that we gave them. That was the
2 portions that were in the -- the northeast and kind of
3 on the eastern side of the box. They were able to get
4 into that area to where they felt that they were an
5 effective resource to conduct a search.

6 Prior to them actually doing that search box
7 of that northeastern and eastern area, they were
8 reporting as they were trying to basically -- like I
9 mentioned before -- so the storm -- it's going to be
10 hard for me to -- to dictate without -- you know -- on
11 the recorder.

12 But -- so you have the eye of the storm
13 here. Kind of the search area like I explained before
14 was to the northeast of the eye. So as they were
15 basically coming from Clearwater, they took a southerly
16 route. And that is when they started to encounter the
17 first outer bands of the storm. That is where they
18 reported initially the 80-knot winds and that they
19 weren't going to be -- unable to penetrate.

20 So the original tasking was to -- in
21 consultation with SMC, which is Captain Cabaughshaw
22 (phonetic), they were going to land on deck and go on
23 Guantanamo, Cuba, stage there, and then we were going
24 to re-launch them later in the day hopefully as the
25 storm maybe continued its progression beyond the

1 Bahamas to where there may be a more effective search
2 at resource.

3 Prior to them actually diverting to
4 Guantanamo Bay, they were able to make their way around
5 the storm and get to an effective area where our drift
6 was actually -- our model was going.

7 And mind you, when we conducted the drift,
8 the object that we drifted was the ship. However, in
9 SAROPS, which is the program that the Coast Guard uses
10 for search planning, we were unable to search for the
11 700-plus-foot ship. The maximum you could search for
12 was 300 feet. And the maximum winds allowable were 40
13 knots. So that was the initial search object.

14 At the same time, we also reached out to the
15 program for guidance on how to search in the middle of
16 a hurricane, essentially. But the initial search was
17 for that object -- a 300-foot vessel in 40-knot winds.

18 So when we drifted that, the C-130 was able
19 to get to that search area. And the aircraft commander
20 made the on-scene decision to remain there. They felt
21 they were an effective platform at the time. And they
22 were able to conduct a search.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

24 MR. WEBB: I asked this question before.

25 This is Paul Webb.

1 In the SAROPS, besides the 300-foot
2 freighter --

3 LT. [REDACTED] Yes?

4 MR. WEBB: -- would you guys input a life
5 raft, a PIW or the boat?

6 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

7 I don't recall on the -- I don't recall.
8 I'd have to look back at the documentation.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: This is Jon Furukawa, NTSB.
10 How long has SAROPS been around?

11 MR. WEBB: 2006.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: 2006.

13 LT. [REDACTED] Ever since my assignment here at
14 the Coast Guard 7th District Command Center.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: So the biggest size vessel is
16 300 feet?

17 LT. [REDACTED] I -- I can't say if it's always
18 been that way. I don't -- I don't know.

19 MR. WEBB: Yes. Yes. Basically -- this is
20 Paul Webb speaking.

21 The data that they use for drift --
22 different size objects and everything -- is data that
23 they'd had available -- everything from PIWs on up to
24 what their searches.

25 It doesn't cover everything because every

1 time they go out to do that research, it takes money,
2 of course, right? So I mean, they have like really
3 strange, not quite maybe what you're looking for
4 objects that you have to input -- different types of
5 fishing vessels and coastal fishing vessels. There's
6 different types of boats. The average vessel that you
7 use in a search, and it's mostly for inshore stuff, is
8 a cuddy cabin -- a 20-foot cuddy cabin is what we learn
9 on basically.

10 And I'm not sure, but I think the 300-foot
11 freighter, just anything beyond that, it doesn't make
12 any difference on size.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

14 MR. WEBB: The movement is about the same.
15 So you're not going to have a 300-foot freighter and a
16 700- or 800-foot freighter drifting apart much
17 differently.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Well, thank you.

19 So does anybody have any other questions for
20 I guess this part of the watch?

21 MR. WEBB: Let's see.

22 LT. [REDACTED] So we -- we pushed that C-130.
23 We also pushed a 60 out from Great Inagua that was able
24 to make it to the northwest. I don't remember the
25 mileage.

1 But basically, they weren't able to -- to
2 proceed much further due to the significant weather
3 they were experiencing.

4 That was also on Friday.

5 PARTICIPANT: Do you know if the C-130, were
6 they -- I mean, the visibility was terrible. They're
7 staying on scene. Are they doing the visual search or
8 using --

9 LT. [REDACTED] It was -- it was radar.

10 PARTICIPANT: Okay.

11 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

12 And then during that -- during that initial
13 search, the C-130 did detect a 500-foot vessel that
14 they queried to confirm that it was not the vessel that
15 we were searching for on that initial search. And that
16 was I believe 60 miles -- 60 to 80 miles outside of the
17 original search box that we provided to them.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you know what the name of
19 that vessel was?

20 LT. [REDACTED] I don't. But it should be in the
21 (inaudible).

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

23 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch from
24 Tote Services.

25 So the storm was still stuck there?

1 LT. [REDACTED] It was for about 24 hours.

2 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: So you got on watch on
3 the second day. And when you left watch on the second
4 day, basically at that point, you had some assets out
5 there looking.

6 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

7 Some assets out there searching. Mostly,
8 they were all aviation from the Coast Guard on that
9 first search day which would be Friday, October 2.

10 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Right.

11 LT. [REDACTED] And then some surface assets en
12 route that had to re-fuel due to other logistical
13 concerns to get them up to the area. Yes.

14 So a lot -- a lot of Friday was managing
15 aviation assets and planning for our surface assets to
16 arrive.

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

18 So on day three when you arrived --

19 LT. [REDACTED] On Saturday.

20 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- right -- and you were
21 going to do your turnover.

22 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

23 And on Saturday, just to clarify, I was not
24 the commanding officer. I was called in to assist the
25 command duty officer to provide some level of --

1 basically since I was there the first day, they wanted
2 to have some continuity there --

3 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Continuity.

4 LT. [REDACTED] -- exactly -- on the Saturday.
5 And then I was the command duty officer on the Sunday,
6 October 4.

7 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

8 When you got on duty on Saturday --

9 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

10 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- and you went through
11 the turnover --

12 LT. [REDACTED] Yes?

13 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- what was the status of
14 the storm? Do you remember?

15 LT. [REDACTED] I was not present for the watch
16 relief initially.

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

18 LT. [REDACTED] Because I did not get called in
19 until just prior to the watch relief.

20 So I live in Fort Lauderdale. So it takes
21 me about an hour to get here. So --

22 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: All right.

23 LT. [REDACTED] -- I was here around 0700.

24 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I'm trying to remember
25 what the storm was doing at that point.

1 The storm was still -- it couldn't have been
2 that far away.

3 Was the Coast Guard still searching for a
4 ship when you came back?

5 LT. [REDACTED] It was one of the search objects,
6 yes.

7 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

8 Do you know when the ship was no longer a
9 search object?

10 LT. [REDACTED] I'd have to look back on my
11 notes. I can't recall if it was Saturday or Sunday.
12 But we utilized a P-8 (inaudible) aircraft from the NAS
13 (phonetic) Jacksonville to help us make that
14 determination.

15 And I don't recall if it was Saturday prior
16 to departing or if it occurred Sunday on my watch. I -
17 - I can't recall.

18 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb.

19 You said the C-130 was picking up small
20 objects. Was that all by radar that they were seeing
21 that?

22 LT. [REDACTED] That would be speculation on my
23 part. I -- I don't recall specifically.

24 MR. WEBB: And they didn't identify what
25 those things were?

1 LT. [REDACTED] Which -- which day are we talking
2 about?

3 MR. WEBB: It'd be the second day.

4 LT. [REDACTED] On the -- so on October 2nd --
5 Friday?

6 MR. WEBB: Yes. When they got around to
7 that area that they could search.

8 LT. [REDACTED] It would be speculation on my
9 part to say if they could identify those or not.

10 The only -- the only specific target they
11 were able to confirm with us was that 500-foot vessel
12 that they actually queried over the radio to confirm it
13 was not the El Faro.

14 MR. WEBB: Okay.

15 LT. [REDACTED] Anything beyond that would be
16 speculation.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: And how far was that ship
18 from --

19 LT. [REDACTED] I believe it was between 60 and
20 80 nautical miles outside of the search box that we
21 provided to the C-130.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Was that to the south?

23 LT. [REDACTED] I don't recall.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

25 Okay. Anything else?

1 MR. WEBB: So the third day you went in to
2 supplement the watch.

3 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

4 MR. WEBB: And then the next day, you had
5 duty then?

6 LT. [REDACTED] Sunday, October 4, I was the
7 command duty officer.

8 MR. WEBB: Okay.

9 So the third day, the search planning, you
10 know that they were still drifting the ship and they
11 started drifting other objects?

12 LT. [REDACTED] We did. On Sunday morning when i
13 came in, there was additional objects that were being
14 searched for. I don't recall what those objects were.
15 Those objects were -- what -- program -- the developers
16 of SAROPS had recommended to our (inaudible)
17 specialist, Mr. Eddy (phonetic). And I don't recall
18 what those objects are from the top of my head. But
19 it's documented in MISIL that those objects selected
20 as.

21 But those objects were what was being
22 searched for Sunday.

23 MR. WEBB: Who was the CO that day?

24 LT. [REDACTED] Sunday?

25 MR. WEBB: Yes.

1 LT. [REDACTED] It was myself.

2 MR. WEBB: Or when you were augmenting the
3 watch.

4 LT. [REDACTED] On Saturday, October 3rd, it
5 would have been -- I believe it was Chief [REDACTED].

6 MR. WEBB: Okay.

7 LT. [REDACTED] Chief -- Chief [REDACTED] was on watch
8 on that Saturday during the day as the CDO.

9 MR. WEBB: But by the time you got back on
10 watch on Sunday --

11 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. And I did not put in a full
12 day on the watch floor on Saturday. So I basically
13 stayed there until about 12:30 in the afternoon, and
14 then was released.

15 MR. WEBB: All right.

16 And then the Sunday watch, were they still
17 looking for the ship or --

18 LT. [REDACTED] That's what I can't recall. I
19 can't remember if it happened Saturday or Sunday if --
20 if it merges in my mind.

21 I'd have to look back at the documentation
22 to make that definitive answer.

23 MR. BRYSON: This is Dennis Bryson.

24 So on Sunday, you were able to use more
25 assets?

1 LT. [REDACTED] I was. Yes. Yes.

2 MR. BRYSON: And those were?

3 LT. [REDACTED] I was able to get two Coast Guard
4 surface assets on scene. So that was our 270-foot
5 medium-endurance cutter and our 210-foot medium-
6 endurance cutter as well as there was two tugs and I
7 believe a third was en route that may have arrived
8 towards the end of the -- the watch on Sunday. I can't
9 recall specifically.

10 But definitely two tugs on scene. And then
11 our two cutters arrived later. I would say early --
12 early afternoon.

13 MR. BRYSON: And the tugs were commercial
14 tugs --

15 LT. [REDACTED] Commercial tugs.

16 MR. BRYSON: -- in the area?

17 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

18 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: They were hired by TOTE.

19 LT. [REDACTED] Hired by TOTE.

20 MR. BRYSON: Oh, okay.

21 LT. [REDACTED] Correct. The Hawk and the
22 Century, I believe.

23 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb.

24 How many aircraft did you have up on the
25 third deck?

1 LT. [REDACTED] I would have to look at the
2 records to give you the specific number of aircraft.
3 It was several -- several different sorties. At least
4 six different C-130s from DoD and DHS agencies, as well
5 as a P-8 flew two sorties that day as well, which was
6 provided by NAS Jacksonville. Several rotor-wing
7 assets from operation Bahamas Turks and Cacaos. So
8 there's two 60s there.

9 We had moved an additional 60 to Autec which
10 is on Andros Island. So we had two 60s on Andros
11 Island, two 60s in Great Inagua. I had a Coast Guard
12 MH-65 Delta Helicopter on the back of the 210-foot
13 medium-endurance cutter which launched later in the
14 afternoon as it arrived closer to the search area. And
15 then -- yes -- numerous -- numerous fixed-wing sorties
16 between the Navy, the Air Force and the Coast Guard
17 throughout Sunday.

18 Specific numbers would be documented in
19 MISIL and SAROPS.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Were all the helos Coast
21 Guard helos or were there Navy helos also.

22 LT. [REDACTED] All of the rotoring assets were
23 U.S. Coast Guard.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: The Coast Guard.

25 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. That provided search --

1 search efforts on behalf of the 7th District, yes.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

3 And two P-8s? Or one P-8 that flew twice?

4 LT. [REDACTED] Two -- two separate P-8s.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

6 LT. [REDACTED] One in the morning and then one
7 later in the afternoon -- early evening.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: And there were six C-130s?

9 LT. [REDACTED] Six different C-130s. Two from
10 Elizabeth City. So those are the H-2130J model which
11 were actually deployed out of Air Station Clearwater
12 due to the storm avoidance from Elizabeth City, North
13 Carolina, two HC-130H models belonging to Air Station
14 Clearwater, and then two HC-130s from the Air Force.
15 One of them was from -- I can't remember the name of
16 the base, but it's up in Hamptons -- the Hamptons, New
17 York. It's one of the rescue squadrons up there. They
18 flew down on Saturday, I believe.

19 MR. WEBB: From where?

20 LT. [REDACTED] From the Hamptons up in New York.
21 I don't recall --

22 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Is that Patrick?

23 LT. [REDACTED] No. Patrick is over here by
24 Cocoa Beach. They provided the second Air Force C-130.

25 So a total of four Coast Guard C-130s and

1 two Air Force. And then, the two different P-8 sorties
2 with two different aircraft and air crews conducting
3 multiple sorties, each of them. So.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: About how many helos? About
5 five helos, you said?

6 LT. [REDACTED] I can't recall how many -- yes.
7 I don't recall if all five were tasked. But definitely
8 one -- there was definitely from the -- from the back
9 of the cutter. Throughout the course of Sunday, we
10 tasked both 60s from Great Inagua and definitely one of
11 the 60s from Andros Island. I don't believe the second
12 from Andros Island was ever tasked with any searching.
13 They were supporting other searcher rescue missions in
14 the Bahamas.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

16 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: It's Patty Finsterbusch
17 from TOTE Services.

18 All right. So I was looking at my records.
19 So it says that at about 1545, we must have been having
20 an update --

21 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

22 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- of all the different
23 equipment.

24 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

25 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: And we then had the first

1 time, two of the H-60s were going to investigate a
2 sighting of a lifeboat.

3 LT. [REDACTED] There were several sightings of
4 lifeboats. So that doesn't distinguish anything in my
5 mind.

6 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Do you know how many
7 lifeboats -- I mean --

8 LT. [REDACTED] So we -- we received reports of -
9 - there ended up being a capsized Boston Whaler that
10 was originally reported as a lifeboat.

11 I mean, this -- this occurred all Sunday.
12 So I -- I couldn't specifically know which incident
13 you're talking about just based on that one report.

14 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: This one ended up being
15 the one with -- you can see the O from El Faro and the
16 P-R from Puerto Rico.

17 LT. [REDACTED] I -- I don't recall that specific
18 one, no.

19 MR. WEBB: What other objects were reported
20 as life raft besides the capsized boat?

21 LT. [REDACTED] There -- it -- it was basically
22 just capsized boats.

23 We had two reports that ended up being the
24 same search object -- a Boston Whaler registered out of
25 North Carolina. It was found by a tug earlier that day

1 and then our aircraft spotted it again later and
2 confirmed it was the same vessel. So that was two
3 reports right there. The various other debris items
4 throughout -- throughout the day --

5 MR. WEBB: Does the debris correspond to
6 what may have been the cargo on the ship?

7 LT. [REDACTED] It could potentially. But
8 neither TOTE nor the Coast Guard could confirm because
9 there wasn't any distinguishing marks from what we
10 could see on scene on some of those debris items.

11 So I know some of them -- a container was
12 found at some point during that day that was found by
13 one of the tugs. They were able to confirm that that
14 container did come from the El Faro later on that
15 afternoon. But --

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, NTSB.

17 Was it during your watch where the body --

18 LT. [REDACTED] It was. That occurred around --
19 that occurred towards the end of my watch just prior to
20 watch relief. So --

21 MR. FURUKAWA: And this was --

22 LT. [REDACTED] Sunday, October 4th.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Sunday the 4th.

24 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. And the report came in at
25 approximately 1730 local time.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: So it was reported as a
2 survival suit?

3 LT. [REDACTED] It was. Yes.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Was it also during this time
5 that it was reported as human remains? Or is that
6 after your watch?

7 LT. [REDACTED] No. That was during my watch as
8 well. So the -- one of the 60s. I don't remember if
9 it was the Great Inagua or the Autec 60. But one of
10 the 60s located a survival suit in one of the search
11 areas. They reported that there were human remains
12 inside of the survival suit.

13 Simultaneously, another report came in from
14 the airborne P-8 provided by the Navy saying that they
15 saw another orange survival suit and the person may be
16 waving their arms.

17 So once the 60 confirmed that the survival
18 suit with the remains inside were that of a deceased
19 individual, the on-scene commander -- or the aircraft
20 commander made the on-scene determination to proceed to
21 the second location where the P-8 believed they had
22 another survival suit.

23 The H-60 got there. At this point, we were
24 starting to close in on dusk and beginning to get
25 closer and closer to sunset. So light was diminishing

1 as -- as the minutes ticked by.

2 The 60 got on scene to where they believed
3 the P-8 saw the second survival suit. Did not locate a
4 survival suit at all, and instead found a trash bag in
5 the water.

6 Once they determined that there was not a
7 survival suit, they returned back to the approximate
8 position where the first survival suit was with the
9 human remains inside and attempted to re-locate which
10 was unsuccessful.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: The trash bag, was that
12 orange? Did they --

13 LT. [REDACTED] I don't know what color the trash
14 bag was.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

16 The P-8 said it was a second survival suit
17 and the person was waving their arms?

18 LT. [REDACTED] They believed the person may be
19 waving their arms. And they did report it as an orange
20 survival suit. Yes.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

22 MR. WEBB: What did it end up being?

23 LT. [REDACTED] What the 60 found on scene was a
24 black trash bag. Or a trash bag. Strike the word
25 black. I don't know what color it was. A trash bag.

1 MR. WEBB: A trash bag. Okay.

2 Did the 60 describe the condition of the
3 human remains?

4 LT. [REDACTED] During the course of that night,
5 a couple hours later, it was -- this was around -- this
6 was again a couple hours later --

7 MR. WEBB: Were you there?

8 LT. [REDACTED] I was.

9 MR. WEBB: Okay.

10 LT. [REDACTED] It was relayed to us through the
11 commanding officer of the air station who was in
12 communications with the aircraft that it was badly
13 decomposed. And that's when we were made aware of the
14 condition of the remains.

15 MR. WEBB: Badly decomposed.

16 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: This is Patty
17 Finsterbusch.

18 Were you on duty on October 5th then I guess
19 --

20 LT. [REDACTED] Monday, October 5th?

21 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: You're doing better than
22 I am. I just have October 5th.

23 LT. [REDACTED] I was not.

24 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

25 So when you left on October 4th --

1 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

2 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- do you recall your
3 turnover to the other group? I know most of the assets
4 weren't flying that night, but the --

5 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

6 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- the vessels were out -
7 -

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Were on scene. Yes.

9 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- going as I recall
10 slowing because there was a lot of debris. It could
11 be. Okay.

12 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. Could be. I -- I don't --
13 I don't know. I wasn't on board the vessel so I don't
14 know what speed they were traveling.

15 But based on previous conversations with the
16 C -- with the cutter operations officers, I know during
17 the evening hours they were progressing at a safe speed
18 due to the numerous debris items that were in the
19 search areas.

20 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Do you recall if the
21 storm was well out of the way by this time?

22 LT. [REDACTED] On Sunday?

23 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Yes.

24 LT. [REDACTED] The storm was continuing to
25 travel to the northeast and it picked up a

1 northeasterly track at about 14 knots by the end of
2 Sunday.

3 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Did you do a drift
4 pattern? I guess what I'm looking for is at
5 that point when you were doing the last -- if they were
6 doing a search pattern, a drift pattern --

7 LT. [REDACTED] Sure.

8 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: -- were we just looking
9 for small objects?

10 LT. [REDACTED] At -- at which point?

11 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I'm going to say Sunday
12 night.

13 LT. [REDACTED] Sunday night, we were focusing
14 more on PIWs, lifeboats and life rafts --

15 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

16 LT. [REDACTED] -- due to locating one deceased
17 person in a survival suit.

18 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

19 LT. [REDACTED] As well as seeing other debris
20 items and small vessels and life rafts.

21 And at that point also, the -- by Sunday
22 night without a doubt, the P-8 aircraft had conducted a
23 sortie where they did not see any large vessels. And
24 they did a sortie all the way up to within 100 nautical
25 miles of the current position of the eye of the storm.

1 And they --

2 MR. BRYSON: Who did that?

3 LT. [REDACTED] The P-8. That was the first
4 sortie the P-8 did I believe on Sunday.

5 MR. BRYSON: A P-8 is a --

6 LT. [REDACTED] The Navy --

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Replacement for the P-3.

8 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: ASW Aircraft -- anti-
10 submarine warfare.

11 MR. BRYSON: (inaudible)?

12 LT. [REDACTED] No. It's a 73 -- it's a
13 converted 737.

14 MR. BRYSON: Oh, okay.

15 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

16 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: But the P-8's also the
17 one that thought it saw someone -- a survival suit
18 moving its hands.

19 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. But a different set of
20 sensors.

21 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: But good sensors.

22 LT. [REDACTED] Different set of sensors.

23 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: That's fine.

24 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

25 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: So the P-8 wasn't flying
2 below using eyes? Okay.

3 LT. [REDACTED] So there's two sorties of the P-
4 8. The first sortie was to -- it was at high
5 altitude all the way up to 100 miles within the storm
6 to ensure that they didn't have any sightings of the
7 ship, basically.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

9 LT. [REDACTED] The second sortie, once we could
10 start to eliminate that, was we reached out to the P-8
11 crew -- the second crew -- so a different crew -- and
12 requested their search profile for small objects in the
13 water -- life rafts, lifeboats.

14 And they gave us a recommended search width
15 and altitude at which they would fly which was I
16 believe 1,000 feet and ten nautical miles on either
17 side of the aircraft.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: A thousand feet?

19 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. For the P-8.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: And that's electronic or
21 eyes?

22 LT. [REDACTED] That would be speculation on my
23 part. I -- I don't recall.

24 Part of it would be electronic -- you know --
25 - be a -- some sort of a radar. I don't know if there

1 was -- if they're able to do any sort of visual in
2 that as well.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: So it wasn't below the
4 clouds?

5 LT. [REDACTED] Which search?

6 MR. FURUKAWA: The second one.

7 LT. [REDACTED] The one at 1,000 feet?

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Right. That was below
9 the clouds?

10 LT. [REDACTED] It was.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

12 When were the aircraft able to start --
13 Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force -- aircraft be able to
14 penetrate the clouds and not get pushed around at --

15 LT. [REDACTED] That would be speculation on my
16 part.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: -- 80 knots?

18 LT. [REDACTED] I don't -- I don't have that
19 information.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: That was on your watch when
21 they started flying below the clouds?

22 LT. [REDACTED] I -- I don't recall.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Because up until then,
24 they were trying to and it was too rough for them,
25 right?

1 LT. [REDACTED] Which -- which day are we
2 discussing?

3 MR. FURUKAWA: See, the first day was the --

4 LT. [REDACTED] So on -- on Friday, October 2nd,
5 it was mostly radar due to the zero visibility and the
6 storm being right in the middle of our search area.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

8 LT. [REDACTED] Sunday, those conditions -- I'm
9 sorry. Saturday, those conditions continued to
10 improve, however, we were still experiencing
11 significant weather.

12 Sunday was the first day of actual -- the
13 storm had moved far enough to the northeast where we
14 were actually able to do more visual searches.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Visual searches started
16 Sunday. Okay.

17 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

18 And our -- our aircraft were able to get
19 into more of the areas that we were looking to search.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

21 And the P-3 -- or the --

22 LT. [REDACTED] The P-8?

23 MR. FURUKAWA: -- P-8.

24 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: I have P-3 on my mind because

1 that's what they've always been in my lifetime.

2 Their two sorties, were those on Sunday or
3 on Saturday?

4 LT. [REDACTED] We had two on Saturday, two on
5 Sunday.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

7 The one with the waving arms, that was
8 Saturday?

9 LT. [REDACTED] That was Sunday.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: That was Sunday.

11 LT. [REDACTED] It was.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

13 LT. [REDACTED] At around -- between -- in the
14 early evening hours prior -- just prior to sunset.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The H-60 that found
16 the body --

17 LT. [REDACTED] That was at around 1730. And I
18 know that because it was just prior to watch relief at
19 1800.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: You say that was simultaneous
21 with the P-8s reporting --

22 LT. [REDACTED] The P-8 sighting occurred
23 sometime after the 60's initial report. The initial
24 report was from the 60 that was on scene with the --
25 with the survival suit and the remains inside.

1 And then, sometime past -- I don't recall
2 the exact time frame -- but some time passed and the P-
3 8 provided the secondary report of another survival
4 suit potentially waving arms.

5 MR. BRYSON: Have you worked with P-8s in
6 the past?

7 LT. [REDACTED] Yes. Not as SMC of the case.
8 But our sect -- subordinate sectors have worked with
9 them, for example, Sector Jacksonville, so where we've
10 had oversight of the case under Sector Jacksonville's
11 SMC.

12 MR. BRYSON: Are you in a position to
13 determine whether it's reasonable for someone flying a
14 737 to detect an individual waving --

15 LT. [REDACTED] No.

16 MR. BRYSON: -- arms --

17 LT. [REDACTED] No.

18 MR. BRYSON: -- in the water?

19 LT. [REDACTED] No.

20 MR. BRYSON: Okay.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Thanks.

22 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb.

23 You probably won't know this, but do you
24 know if there was any waist-cam footage of the going
25 down to check the one survival suit?

1 LT. [REDACTED] I don't know.

2 MR. WEBB: The only reason I say that is
3 maybe there's some identifying marks on that survival
4 suit. I don't know if the --

5 LT. [REDACTED] I don't know.

6 MR. WEBB: They didn't get any of that
7 information -- serial numbers or anything like that on
8 that?

9 LT. [REDACTED] I don't -- I don't -- I don't
10 know. Nothing was passed to the watch during that time
11 frame.

12 MR. WEBB: No de-brief on that?

13 LT. [REDACTED] I was not in the command center
14 when they conducted the de-brief with the air crew.

15 MR. WEBB: All right. That's what getting
16 the full MISIL package -- a lot of that I think maybe
17 some of this information will get better, I guess.
18 These guys aren't going to remember.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anything else?

20 MR. BRYSON: Well, I think you all know --
21 you sat in on some other interviews so you have some of
22 this information. But did they recover the body?

23 LT. [REDACTED] No.

24 MR. WEBB: No, unfortunately.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So you're on the

1 second day.

2 You worked on Friday the 2nd?

3 LT. [REDACTED] Correct.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Saturday the 3rd, you're off.

5 But then you came back to work on Sunday the 4th?

6 LT. [REDACTED] Saturday, I was there from about
7 07 to about 1230 in the afternoon to provide some
8 continuity.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

10 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

11 And then I was back on duty in a qualified
12 watch position on Sunday.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Sunday?

14 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: And how about Monday?

16 LT. [REDACTED] I was not in the command center
17 on Monday.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

19 And what was the next time you were back?

20 LT. [REDACTED] Friday.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Friday.

22 LT. [REDACTED] The following Friday.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Friday the 9th. Okay.

24 So your watches aren't two days on, three
25 days off?

1 LT. [REDACTED] No. They're -- they're sporadic.

2 So I -- I actually -- I worked on Monday,
3 October 5th, but not here in the command center. I was
4 working on some other administrative functions at
5 another location for the Coast Guard.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

7 MR. BRYSON: On the Sunday watch, were there
8 other cases going on?

9 LT. [REDACTED] Yes.

10 MR. BRYSON: How many?

11 LT. [REDACTED] I don't know how many.

12 MR. BRYSON: I mean, roughly?

13 LT. [REDACTED] We had -- we had dispatched
14 aircraft or were in the process of dispatching aircraft
15 up to South Carolina to assist in the flooding relief.
16 So we started getting those calls Friday afternoon.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Paul, anymore questions?

18 MR. WEBB: No.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

20 MR. WEBB: I'm done.

21 LT. [REDACTED] And then one thing, just to
22 mitigate that we had obviously additional watch
23 standers (phonetic) on the watch floor, both another
24 (inaudible) that was handling all other search and
25 rescue cases besides the El Faro. So we had one

1 (inaudible) dedicated to the El Faro case and another
2 SROU watch standard dedicated to all other SAR, in
3 addition to a full IMT watch that was stood up to
4 assist with other logistics.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: That was two extra people --
6 the IMT?

7 LT. [REDACTED] The IMT was -- yes, two others.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: And what does IMT stand for
9 again?

10 LT. [REDACTED] Incident Management Team.

11 MR. WEBB: With the IMT, what duties did you
12 guys give to them?

13 LT. [REDACTED] They handle a lot of the
14 conference calls, logistics for sending out conference
15 numbers, passcodes, et cetera --

16 MR. WEBB: Do they enter --

17 LT. [REDACTED] -- providing some of the
18 administrative functions that were requested by
19 (inaudible) with data calls, et cetera.

20 MR. WEBB: Okay. So do they enter what they
21 do in the MISIL, too?

22 LT. [REDACTED] I don't recall.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: And is there anything that
24 you'd like to add or change in the interview?

25 LT. [REDACTED] No.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: No? Okay.

2 Are there any questions we should have asked
3 you but did not?

4 LT. [REDACTED] No.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

6 Do you have any suggestions for preventing a
7 reoccurrence of --

8 CDR. [REDACTED] Now they're looking for you to
9 speculate based on your experience if you have any
10 opinions regarding this case and now is the time to
11 share.

12 LT. [REDACTED] No.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: No? Okay.

14 And is there anyone else that we should
15 interview?

16 And we already have kind of a list of people
17 to interview.

18 But who did you relieve on I guess Friday?

19 MR. WEBB: Chief [REDACTED] right?

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Was it Chief [REDACTED] And then
21 Chief [REDACTED] relieved you?

22 LT. [REDACTED] On Friday, I relieved Petty
23 Officer [REDACTED] -- Friday morning.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: And we're going to interview
25 Petty Officer [REDACTED]

1 CDR. [REDACTED] All right. I have [REDACTED]
2 scheduled for tonight.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Okay.

4 CDR. [REDACTED] Petty Officer [REDACTED], did he
5 play a significant role?

6 LT. [REDACTED] I -- I wasn't on duty with Petty
7 Officer [REDACTED], so I can't speak to what he did or
8 didn't do.

9 MR. WEBB: Well, pull him in and we can ask
10 him and then --

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

12 MR. WEBB: -- if they don't, then we can
13 move on.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

15 CDR. [REDACTED] I have him scheduled for
16 tomorrow.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: For tomorrow? Okay. Great.
18 And anything else?

19 LT. [REDACTED] Nothing else.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And with that being
21 said, it is now 1503, and we're ending the interview
22 with Command Duty Officer Lieutenant [REDACTED]

23 (Whereupon, at 3:03 p.m., the interview was
24 completed.)
25

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Lt. [REDACTED]
Miami, FL

DATE: 10-13-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 52 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

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